

THE PATTERNS OF MISSIONARY WORK AND EMIGRATION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, ENGLAND

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Jeremiah, speaking of a Latter-day gathering of scattered Israel, prophesied that the Lord would send “for many fishers... and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks” (Jeremiah 16:16). This prophecy could well be applied to scholarly work undertaken to date on the rise and fall of LDS missionary work, convert baptisms, and emigration from Britain in the nineteenth century. The main emphasis has been on relatively ‘large scale’ aspects of the “gathering,” including the Apostolic Missions of 1837–1838 and 1840–1841. Some have focused on specific geographic areas, either because of the prominence of the missionaries that served there, or because of the sheer number of people who joined the LDS Church and subsequently emigrated to help “build Zion” in the United States. Other historical and sociological studies have investigated wider issues, such as the Victorian context of the gathering, the organizational development of the British Mission and the Church, missionary work and opposition to it, and the make-up and experience of Church members themselves.

Jeremiah also prophesied that, in some places, the gathering would be on a much smaller scale: “The Lord... will take one of a city, and two of a family, and [bring them] to Zion” (Jeremiah 3:14). This description certainly applies to LDS activity in many other parts of Britain. However, whether due to small numbers, paucity of data or the relative obscurity of missionaries or members, such areas have been neglected. Any attempt to remedy this neglect faces formidable difficulty. When I suggested the idea of this paper to a widely published Professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, Provo,

Utah, he replied, “That would be like trying to find a needle in a haystack.” The research and writing of this paper represents an attempt to find that needle and hence fill a gap in our knowledge of the Latter day Saints in one particular English county: Buckinghamshire.

This county experienced few of the direct effects of the Industrial Revolution that transformed many other parts of Britain in the nineteenth century. This was probably due to a lack of natural resources, such as coal and iron,¹ and relatively poor communications. There was no major industrial center to attract large numbers from elsewhere—a pattern typical of areas where missionary work, convert baptisms, and emigration have been more closely examined. Yet it is clear the LDS missionaries did penetrate the Eastern and Southern borders of Buckinghamshire in the 1840s and 1850s.

This paper tells an untold story and attempts to answer the following questions:

- Who were the first Mormon missionaries to serve in Buckinghamshire in the nineteenth century? What was the result of their labors in terms of convert baptisms and emigration?
- Who were the first Buckinghamshire natives to join the LDS Church, how did they come in contact with the Church, and what role did they play in the growth of the Church in Buckinghamshire?
- What role did these members play in missionary work and convert baptisms?
- What transient or lasting contributions did these missionaries and converts make to the Church?
- At what specific locations did missionaries and members meet and worship?

¹ Michael Reed, *A History of Buckinghamshire* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore and Co. Ltd., 1993), 114.

**THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE: THE FIRST BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NATIVES TO JOIN THE CHURCH**

On July 31, 1837, one day after the first Mormon² baptisms in England, the original seven missionaries to proselyte in England held a council in Preston. It was decided that Elders Willard Richards and John Goodson should go to Bedford,³ “There being a good prospect, from the information received, of a Church being built up in that city.”⁴ They left on 1 August and arrived at Bedford the following day. Work progressed quickly. The first baptisms occurred on 10 August⁵ and by December a Bedford Branch had been organized.⁶ Berrill Covington, later to play an important role in the beginnings of the Church in Buckinghamshire, was baptized in 1838 by Elder Willard Richards.⁷ He was instrumental in the conversion of two of the first nine Buckinghamshire natives⁸ and later became a member of the first branch organized on Buckinghamshire soil.⁹

The first Buckinghamshire native to join the Church, based on extant baptismal and membership records, was a man named Samuel

² The term “Mormon” is the most frequently used reference to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and its members, for their acceptance of an additional book of scripture beyond the *Holy Bible*, entitled “*The Book of Mormon*.” The book takes its name from a man named Mormon, who according to the book was an ancient prophet-historian who abridged one thousand years of the religious history of the natives of the American Continent (600 BC through 400 A.D.).

³ “History of Brigham Young,” *Millennial Star*, March 4, 1865, 135.

⁴ Heber Chase Kimball, *Journal of Heber C. Kimball, an elder of the Church of Jesus Christ of latter day saints: giving an account of his mission to Great Britain, and the commencement of the work of the Lord in that land* (Nauvoo, Illinois: Robinson and Smith, 1840), 20.

⁵ “History of Brigham Young,” 135.

⁶ Samuel George Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge: Pioneering the Outposts of Zion* (Logan, Utah: S. George Ellsworth, 1987), 20.

⁷ Manuscript History of the Bedfordshire Conference, CR mh 607, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

⁸ Hemel Hempstead Branch Record, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10, FHL.

⁹ Whipsnade Branch Record altered to Edlesborough Branch Record on April 1, 1849, Film no. 86996, Item 12, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.

Smith.¹⁰ Samuel grew up in Sherington, Buckinghamshire. In 1837 he married Mary Ann Line from Hemel Hempstead.¹¹ They remained in Hemel Hempstead for the first year of their marriage. Their first child was born there but did not live. However, the Smith's first living child was born in Sherington, placing them there in 1839.¹² Records indicate they moved to London shortly thereafter. In London they met future LDS Apostle and Church president, Elder Lorenzo Snow, who was then a proselytizing missionary. Elder Snow baptized Samuel on December 26, 1841.¹³ Samuel's parents, Daniel William Smith and Sarah Wooding Smith, received religious instruction from the missionaries with him and were also baptized by Elder Lorenzo Snow at about the same time.¹⁴ His wife was baptized later, in June of 1842.¹⁵ These two couples and their children subsequently moved to Liverpool to prepare for emigration,¹⁶ and in 1843 they left England to join the Mormons in Nauvoo, Illinois.¹⁷

The fourth Buckinghamshire native to join the Church came from the same family. George Smith, also born and raised in Shering-

¹⁰ *Box Elder Lore of the Nineteenth Century* (Brigham City, Utah: Box Elder Chapter, Sons of Utah Pioneers, 1951), 75.

¹¹ Frank Eshom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Pioneers Book Publishing Company, 1913), 1169.

¹² "Samuel Smith and Mary Ann Line Family Group Record," ancestral file numbers 2CGD-XQ and BQ58-RF, *Ancestral File*, version 4.19 (2007), accessed online, www.familysearch.org, April 17, 2007.

¹³ Calvin N. Smith, *The History of Samuel Smith of Sherington, England, His Five Wives and their Posterity*, accessed online, freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~rhutch/famhistory/d&ssmith/samuel_smith_history_long.html, July 23, 2007, 4.

¹⁴ Elsie May Smith Larsen, *History of Samuel Smith*, accessed online, freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~rhutch/famhistory/d&ssmith/samuel_smith_history.html, August 2, 2007.

¹⁵ Smith, *The History of Samuel Smith of Sherington*, accessed online, July 23, 2007, 4.

¹⁶ Lynne Watkins Jorgensen, "The First London Mormons, 1840-1845," (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1988), 48.

¹⁷ *Mormon Immigration Index*, LDS Family History Library. Salt Lake City, Utah.

ton, was Daniel and Sarah's eldest son.¹⁸ He was baptized into the faith on January 30, 1842, at Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, by Elder John W. Lewis. He was confirmed¹⁹ a member by Elder Berrill Covington.²⁰ George's baptism followed that of his younger brother Samuel and his parents by five weeks.²¹

George Smith married Caroline Harrison in Hemel Hempstead on Christmas Day in 1835. Their first child was born there in 1837. They moved to Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire shortly afterwards; family history records indicate their next two children were born there in 1838 and 1840. However, George and Caroline Smith soon returned to Hemel Hempstead, where they had six additional children between 1841 and 1850. It appears from these records the family was living in or around Hemel Hempstead during most of the 1840s—and certainly in 1842 when George joined the Church.²² His wife Caroline finally joined the Church on May 20, 1845, when she was baptized by Berrill Covington.²³ In April of 1846, George was appointed President of the Hemel Hempstead Branch.²⁴ Shortly after, the family again relocated to Great Missenden and became members of the Aylesbury Branch, where they remained until they emigrated in 1854.²⁵ Conse-

¹⁸ "Daniel Williams Smith and Sarah Wooding Smith Family Record," ancestral file numbers 1FR9-CF and 1FR9-DL, *Ancestral File*, version 4.19 (2007), accessed online, www.familysearch.org, July 23, 2007.

¹⁹ Joining the Mormon faith consists of receiving two ordinances: baptism by immersion, following the New Testament model of Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River, and an ordinance referred to as "confirmation," following the Apostles bestowing the "gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands" as recorded in Acts 8:15-17.

²⁰ Hemel Hempstead Branch Record, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10, FHL.

²¹ Larsen, *The History of Samuel Smith*, accessed online, August 2, 2007.

²² "George Smith and Caroline Harrison Family Group Record," ancestral file numbers 1FRB-1T and 1TRV-PB, *Ancestral File*, version 4.19 (2007), accessed online, www.familysearch.org, April 17, 2007.

²³ Hemel Hempstead Branch Record, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10, FHL.

²⁴ Robert Hodgert, *Journal of Robert Hodgert*, call no. BX 8670.1 .H664h, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

²⁵ *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL.

quently, the first four natives of Buckinghamshire to join the Church were all members of the Daniel William and Sarah Wooding Smith family from Sherington.

The next Buckinghamshire native to join the Church was George Coleman. George, who was also from Sherington,²⁶ married Elizabeth Bailey from Olney, Buckinghamshire, in 1834. They established a family home in Sherington from 1835–1840, and their first three children were born there. They relocated to Hemel Hempstead sometime after the birth of their third child in Sherington. Family records indicate their next eight children were born in or around Hemel Hempstead between 1842 and 1859.²⁷ George joined the Church in 1845, and was also baptized by Berrill Covington. His wife was baptized later by George Smith in 1849.²⁸ George Coleman played a prominent role in the growth of the Church at Hemel Hempstead, with many of the baptisms in that branch being attributed to him.²⁹

James Hawkins, from Pitstone, Buckinghamshire, also joined the Church in Hemel Hempstead. He was baptized in October 1845, just a month after George Coleman, by Elder Elisha Hildebrand Davis. In 1846 Brother Hawkins became the first person to represent the Hemel Hempstead Branch at a Church conference held in London.³⁰ He owned a bakery and a grocery store, which he sold to Samuel and Joy Claridge, thus enabling his family to emigrate to America in 1849.³¹

The first six Buckinghamshire natives to join the Church were not converted within the county, but in places to which they had relocated—either Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire or London. Four of these men, Samuel and George Smith, George Coleman and James Hawkins were baptized prior to their wives and children, but all of their

²⁶ Esshom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah*, 814.

²⁷ “George Coleman and Elizabeth Bailey Family Group Record,” ancestral file numbers 1FFH-ZB and 1FFJ-0G, *Ancestral File*, version 4.19 (2007), accessed online, www.familysearch.org, May 5, 2007.

²⁸ Hemel Hempstead Branch Record, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10, FHL.

²⁹ Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge: Pioneering the Outposts of Zion*, 15.

³⁰ Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge: Pioneering the Outposts of Zion*, 11.

³¹ Ellsworth, *Samuel Claridge: Pioneering the Outposts of Zion*, 7.

family members eventually joined the Church³² and emigrated with them to America to help build Zion.³³ Five were brought into the Church through the efforts of elders sent from America, Lorenzo Snow, John W. Lewis, and E.H. Davis—while one of their conversions was brought about through the efforts of Berrill Covington, a recent and local convert. The involvement of recent converts in missionary activity established a pattern that continued in Buckinghamshire throughout the nineteenth century—a phenomenon that will be more closely examined throughout this paper.

THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE: 19TH CENTURY BRANCHES OF RECORD

At the British General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, held on April 6, 1844, it was reported that there was a branch of eight members at Wolverton, Buckinghamshire.³⁴ As we have seen, the first three families with ties to Buckinghamshire to join the Church came originally from Sherington, which is only six miles from Wolverton. It is tempting to assume the membership of the branch at Wolverton, reported in 1844, was largely composed of the ‘Sherington group’. Unfortunately, this appears impossible. The Daniel and Samuel Smith families emigrated in 1843,³⁵ and hence could not have been in Wolverton in 1844. The George Smith family was in Hemel Hempstead in 1844,³⁶ and the George Coleman and James Hawkins families were not baptized until 1845.³⁷

Apart from the reference to Wolverton at the Church’s General Conference of 1844, no other evidence of the existence of this branch has yet come to light. Assuming the Conference was correctly informed and there was a branch at Wolverton, who could have be-

³² See Hemel Hempstead Branch Record, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10, FHL.

³³ *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL.

³⁴ “General Conference,” *Millennial Star*, April 1844, 195.

³⁵ *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL.

³⁶ “George Smith and Caroline Harrison Family Group Record,” ancestral file numbers 1FRB-1T and 1TRV-PB, accessed online, www.familysearch.org, April 17, 2007.

³⁷ Hemel Hempstead Branch Record, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10, FHL.

longed to it? Rapid social and economic change caused a good deal of internal migration in Britain. In 1836, Wolverton became the site of the locomotive works of the London & Birmingham Railway, mainly because it represented the mid-point between these two cities.

The works grew rapidly and eventually employed over two thousand men. By 1845, the railway had built some two-hundred houses for its workers, along with schools, a Church and a market.³⁸ A thorough investigation of the activities of LDS missionaries reveals no evidence of any missionaries in the area around Wolverton and Sherington at this time. Of course, much missionary work was taking place in London and Hemel Hempstead. The most likely—though still speculative—explanation of the Wolverton Branch is that it must have consisted of a single family who joined the Church earlier, perhaps in London or Hemel Hempstead, and then relocated to Wolverton. They could have possibly come from even further a-field, since some of the more highly skilled workers at Wolverton would have come from the North of England.

It was not until five years later, on April 1, 1849, that the first two branches of the Church in Buckinghamshire were established in Edlesborough and Simpson.³⁹ There is no historical evidence the organization of these two branches on the same day was other than coincidental. However, the geographical location of these branches is significant. Missionaries had been laboring in the neighboring county of Bedfordshire since 1837,⁴⁰ and, although in Buckinghamshire, both Edlesborough and Simpson lie very close to its border with Bedfordshire. One unanswered question—one that will require further exploration—is why it took twelve years for Mormonism to take root in Buckinghamshire considering its rapid growth in the neighboring county of Bedfordshire. This question is particularly interesting when considered in conjunction with the fact that straw-plaiting was a major

³⁸ Reed, *A History of Buckinghamshire*, 111.

³⁹ See Edlesborough Branch Record, Film no. 86996, Item 12 and Simpson Branch Record, Film no. 87032, Items 11-12, FHL.

⁴⁰ See "History of Brigham Young," 135.

cottage industry in both Eastern Buckinghamshire and western Bedfordshire.⁴¹ In fact, the chief center of commerce for this industry was Luton,⁴² Bedfordshire, where there was a robust branch of the Church, only seven miles from Edlesborough and the county boundary.⁴³

The Edlesborough Branch was actually a reorganization of an existing branch. A branch at Whipsnade, Bedfordshire was organized on February 27, 1848,⁴⁴ but became the Edlesborough Branch on April 1, 1849 after its relocation.⁴⁵ Edlesborough, right on the boundary between Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, is less than three miles from Whipsnade. Eaton Bray is directly next to Edlesborough, though on the Bedfordshire side of the boundary. Maps of the period suggest Eaton Bray and Edlesborough really formed one community⁴⁶ and it seems that, whatever the case elsewhere, the county boundary bore little significance. In many missionary and member journals the entire area is referred to as “Eaton Bray,” even though a portion of it is technically Edlesborough. This can make it difficult for researchers to be sure exactly which village and county is being referred to, although most official Church and government publications do make the distinction.⁴⁷

On April 4, 1846, Elder Elisha Hildebrand Davis, an American missionary and the President of the London Conference, baptized Benjamin Johnson, a native of Northall, Buckinghamshire, in the small

⁴¹ Reed, *A History of Buckinghamshire*, 117.

⁴² Data obtained online, www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk/data/occupations/straw-plait.htm, July 25, 2007.

⁴³ See Luton Branch Record, Film no. 87106, Items 17-20, FHL.

⁴⁴ “Conference Minutes-London,” *Millennial Star*, May 15, 1848, 148.

⁴⁵ Edlesborough Branch Record, Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL.

⁴⁶ Ordinance Survey plan, 6-inch scale, Buckinghamshire sheet XXV.SW [i.e. 25 SW], 2nd edition, Archives, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Aylesbury, Buckingham, England.

⁴⁷ See Hodgert, *Journal of Robert Hodgert*, call no. BX 8670.1 .H664h, Special Collections, BYU. Elder Hodgert records that a decision was made at the January 5, 1850 Special General Conference in Liverpool to move the “Eaton Bray” Branch to the Bedfordshire Conference. However, official notes from that conference in “Special General Conference,” *Millennial Star*, January 15, 1850 refer to the same branch as the “Eddlesbro” branch.

community of Whipsnade, Bedfordshire.⁴⁸ Whipsnade was less than eight miles north of Hemel Hempstead where Davis worked during the previous six months.⁴⁹ Benjamin's wife, Charlotte, also a Buckinghamshire native, was baptized three weeks later, on April 27, 1846,⁵⁰ by Elder Thomas Squires, another local convert.⁵¹ Squires had been serving in the Hemel Hempstead Branch Presidency as a counselor to George Smith.⁵²

The Johnsons were somewhat atypical converts, with an unusually high social status. It appears they were both educated and refined. Benjamin purportedly graduated from Oxford and Charlotte from a girls' finishing school. Benjamin loved music and often earned money playing the bass violin. He also played other stringed instruments, the flute and the clarinet.⁵³ Charlotte was known for her passion for reading the classics and memorizing and reciting poetry.⁵⁴ Benjamin and Charlotte became the founding members of the Eaton Bray Branch,⁵⁵ and, with the exception of the traveling Elders, they remained the only members of the Church in the area for over five months.⁵⁶ On Decem-

⁴⁸ Whipsnade Branch Record altered to Edlesborough Branch Record on April 1, 1849, Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL.

⁴⁹ Hemel Hempstead Branch Record, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10, FHL.

⁵⁰ See Eaton Bray Branch Record, or Whipsnade Branch Record, altered to Edlesborough Branch Record on April 1, 1849, both found on Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL.

⁵¹ John Paternoster Squires, *Diary Excerpts, 1848-1900*, MSS 976, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

⁵² Hodgert, *Journal of Robert Hodgert*, BX 8670.1 .H664h, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, US.

⁵³ Wayne Rollins Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson, 3 June 1774-9 Oct. 1934*, (Centerville, Utah: W. R. Hansen, 1993), call no. 929.273 J63hw, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 25 and 33.

⁵⁴ Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson*, call no. 929.273 J63hw, FHL, 25.

⁵⁵ See Eaton Bray Branch Record; Film no. 86996, Item 12. Note: Eaton Bray is less than 1 mile from their first residence in Northall, only 1 mile from their second residence in Totternhoe, and just over three miles from their residence in Whipsnade.

⁵⁶ Whipsnade Branch Record altered to Edlesborough Branch Record on April 1, 1849, Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL.

ber 1, 1846, Elder Squires ordained Benjamin an Elder, and Benjamin later served as the president of that branch.⁵⁷ As the Church began to grow in the area, the branch was divided and the Johnsons became the founding members of the Whipsnade Branch, and Benjamin again served as president.⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that the subsequent change in the Whipsnade Branch's name and its relocation to Edlesborough occurred at about the same time the Johnsons moved back to Northall, a hamlet of Edlesborough.⁵⁹

Unlike all other areas in Buckinghamshire, the Church grew quickly in the Eaton Bray–Edlesborough area. At its peak the Eaton Bray Branch consisted of seventy-seven members⁶⁰, and the Edlesborough Branch, under the leadership of Benjamin Johnson, became even larger. It became the largest branch in nineteenth century Buckinghamshire, with over 160 members at its peak.⁶¹ The Edlesborough Branch was also the only LDS congregation in Buckinghamshire listed in the 1851 Census of Religious Worship. The Census record states:

170. Edlesborough Latter Day Saint Meeting Place. Erected before 1800.... On the 30th march Afternoon General Congregation 90; Evening General Congregation 100. Dated 31st March. Signed Benjamin Johnson, Presiding Elder, Northall Bucks.⁶²

⁵⁷ Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson*, call no. 929.273 J63hw, Family History Library, 28. See also Job Smith, *Diary and Autobiography, 1849-1877*, call no. MSS 881, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

⁵⁸ British Mission, Manuscript History and historical reports, Whipsnade Branch, London Conference, Film no. LR 1140/2, Reel 6, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

⁵⁹ Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson*, call no. 929.273 J63hw, FHL, 30.

⁶⁰ Eaton Bray Branch Record, Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL.

⁶¹ Whipsnade Branch Record altered to Edlesborough Branch Record on April 1, 1849, Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL.

⁶² Edward Legg, ed., *Buckingham Returns of the Census of Religious Worship 1851*, (Aylesbury, England: Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1991), 45-46.

According to local histories⁶³ and historians,⁶⁴ the building mentioned in the census record was actually a public house called “The Good Intent.” An adjacent pond was used for baptisms by immersion. The building is still standing and has since been converted into two private houses. The pictures following (Figures 1, 2 and 3), taken by the author, show the placard that still exists by the building, the building itself, and an adjacent gravel area reported to be the site of the former pond.



Figure 1. Signage "Good Intent"



Figure 2. The "Good Intent" Building



Figure 3. Former Pond Area

It seems the real key to the rapid growth of the Church in Edlesborough and Eaton Bray was not so much the impact of the American Elders, but rather the enthusiastic work of the locals who had themselves only recently joined the Church. In less than seven years (April 4, 1846 – March 27, 1853) Benjamin Johnson helped to bring

⁶³ Beryl Wagstaff, *The Romance of Edlesborough*, (Edlesborough, England: Carrie Cardon Lovell), 31.

⁶⁴ From an interview with the publisher of *The Romance of Edlesborough*, Carrie Cardon Lovell, at her home in Edlesborough, April 28, 2007.

more people into the Church than anyone else in nineteenth century Buckinghamshire.⁶⁵

However, Johnson was only one of several local convert missionaries, all of whom enjoyed almost as much success. It seems that once the American or local missionaries had organized a small branch, they appointed recently baptized converts as lay ministers, and relied on them to bring in additional converts. Thus, Benjamin Johnson was the only person the American Elder, Elisha Hildebrand Davis, actually baptized and confirmed in any of the three branches the Johnsons belonged to.⁶⁶ In other words, the Edlesborough Branch continued to grow and prosper because of the efforts of recently baptized members who began serving as missionaries, some immediately following their baptism.⁶⁷

In the Edlesborough Branch alone, Benjamin Johnson baptized thirty people, Robert Hodgert twenty-three people, George Smith fifteen, Berrill Covington twelve, John Mead, a priest, nineteen, and Samuel Impey, also a priest, twenty-six.⁶⁸ These missionaries did not confine their efforts to the Edlesborough Branch; Benjamin baptized nearly twenty people into the Eaton Bray and Studham Branches,⁶⁹ and

⁶⁵See Whipsnade Branch Record, altered to Edlesborough Branch Record on April 1, 1849, Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL. See also Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson*, call no. 929.273 J63hw, Family History Library, 363-365 for a list of persons baptized, confirmed, and ordained to priesthood offices by Benjamin Johnson.

⁶⁶ See Eaton Bray Branch Record, or Whipsnade Branch Record, altered to Edlesborough Branch Record on April 1, 1849, both found on Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL.

⁶⁷ For example, while the elders were confirming Thomas Squires, they ordained him an elder "before taking off their hands." In John Paternoster Squires, *Notes of Interest to the Descendents of Thomas Squires*, (Salt Lake City: Eva Beatrice Squires Poleman, 1970): 139.

⁶⁸ Whipsnade Branch Record, altered to Edlesborough Branch Record on April 1, 1849, both found on Film no. 86996, Item 12, FHL.

⁶⁹ See Eaton Bray Branch Record; Film no. 86996, Item 12. See also Studham Branch Record, Film no. 87035, Items 10-11, FHL. It is important to note that some of these individuals' Church membership records were later transferred to the Edlesborough Branch; Benjamin Johnson baptized a total of 36.

all of the other local missionaries baptized members in nearby branches.⁷⁰ This paper will show the heavy involvement of newly baptized converts was crucial to the growth of the Church throughout Buckinghamshire.

The Edlesborough Branch grew to be nearly four times larger than any other nineteenth century Buckinghamshire branch, and the extant records only span the years 1846–1849. Elder Robert Hodgert, a local convert who became a missionary, wrote of the success of the Church in this area: “The work continued, steadily increasing; truth was triumphant; the word was confirmed with signs following, much to the astonishment of the people. The Truth had now taken deep root... Nothing else was talked about except this new doctrine and these men who are turning the world upside down.”⁷¹ By 1850, the growth of the Church in this area was formally recognized by Church leaders in London, and on 5 January of that year, Elder John Banks, then President of the London Conference, transferred the Luton, Edlesborough, Flamstead, Hemel Hempstead and Studham Branches from the London Conference to the Bedfordshire Conference.⁷² Interestingly, this formal action, recorded in the *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, is the last mention made of the Edlesborough Branch in any extant official or other historical document.⁷³

This could well be the result of the large number of Edlesborough Saints who emigrated from 1851 through 1868. Of the 163

See, Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson*, call no. 929.273 J63hw, Family History Library, 30.

⁷⁰ See Eaton Bray Branch Record, Film no. 86996, Item 12; Studham Branch Record, Film no. 87035, Items 10-11; See also Kensworth Branch Record, Film no. 87007, Items 10-12, FHL.

⁷¹ Hodgert, *Journal of Robert Hodgert*, BX 8670.1 .H664h, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, US.

⁷² “Special General Conference,” *Millennial Star*, January 15, 1850, 26-27.

⁷³ See British Mission, Manuscript History and historical reports, “Eddlesborough Branch, London and Bedfordshire Conference,” Film no. LR 1140/2, Reel 2, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. There is no mention of this branch after 1850 in the *Millennial Star* or any other public or private document cited in this work.

names found on this branch record, seventy-seven can be identified as emigrants, which was 47 percent of the Branch's total membership. Most of these families emigrated through the Church's official emigration offices located in Liverpool.⁷⁴ One noteworthy exception, the George Cheshire family, emigrated through London on the famed sail ship *Amazon*,⁷⁵ and an account of their emigration was included in Charles Dickens' *The Uncommercial Traveller*.⁷⁶

The other Buckinghamshire branch that was organized on April 1, 1849 was located at Simpson. Elder Reed⁷⁷ formally organized this branch on the same day he baptized William Luck, his mother, Rosannah Button Luck, and Ellen Briant.⁷⁸ William's father John Luck and David Cowley were baptized shortly after,⁷⁹ and Cowley was called as the first Branch President.⁸⁰ This branch was unlike the one based at Edlesborough in two significant ways. Although Simpson was less than three miles from the Buckinghamshire/Bedfordshire boundary, there is no evidence its origins had any links with LDS activities in the neighboring counties. Furthermore, the Church in the Simpson area was severely hampered by intense opposition from local landowners who did everything possible to frustrate missionary activities, trying to prevent the holding of public meetings and the establishment of a meeting place. Simpson's contrast with Edlesborough, where success must have owed something to the high status of the Johnson family, is striking.

Elder Job Smith, the President of the Bedfordshire Conference wrote of the difficulty encountered by members of the Church: "pro-

⁷⁴ *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL. See also Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847-1868, Database, accessed online, www.lds.org/Churchhistory/library/pioneercompanysearch/1,15773,3966-1,00.html, April-July, 2007.

⁷⁵ "George and Elizabeth Cheshire," *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL.

⁷⁶ Dickens, *The Writings of Charles Dickens*, 27:202.

⁷⁷ See "Conference Minutes," *Millennial Star*, August 15, 1847, 247.

⁷⁸ Simpson Branch Record, Film no. 87032, Items 11-12, FHL.

⁷⁹ Simpson Branch Record, Film no. 87032, Items 11-12 FHL.

⁸⁰ Job Smith, *Diary and Autobiography, 1849-1877*, call no. MSS 881, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT., 123.

ceeded next day to Simpson. Here is a small branch of the Church under the presidency of David Cowley. I staid at the house of William Luck. The landlords of all the saints houses here positively forbid any meetings being held therein, consequently I had to get the saints together in a covert manner and teach them.”⁸¹ (Original spelling retained). Although Elder Smith and other missionaries sought to minister to the saints in this branch, the continued opposition to the Church is reflected in later journal entries. On December 5, 1852, Elder Smith wrote, “Called at Simpson and comforted the few saints there,”⁸² and on May 30, 1853 he penned, “I... privately visited the Saints at Simpson.”⁸³

Despite intense opposition from local landlords, the Simpson Branch grew from the original three members to thirty-eight, with most of that growth occurring between 1849 and 1850.⁸⁴ As with the branches in the Edlesborough area, newly baptized convert missionaries made a significant contribution. One notable example was William Luck, a young man who did not marry until after he immigrated to ‘Zion’ (Utah). Of the original thirty members of this branch, thirteen came into the Church as a result of Luck’s efforts.⁸⁵ Although the extant record of the Simpson Branch only spans the years 1849–1853, other records of members in this area have been located.⁸⁶ An unprecedented twenty-nine of the eventual thirty-eight people recorded as members of this branch emigrated—an astoundingly high 76 percent compared to the emigration rates of other Buckinghamshire branches, which ranged from 37 percent to 47 percent.⁸⁷

One of the families that joined after 1853 was the Alexander George Sutherland family, of Stony Stratford. They converted in 1862 and emigrated the same year, eventually settling in Springville, Utah.

⁸¹ Job Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 123.

⁸² Job Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 178.

⁸³ Job Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 186.

⁸⁴ Simpson Branch Record, Film no. 87032, Items 11-12, FHL.

⁸⁵ Simpson Branch Record, Film no. 87032, Items 11-12, FHL.

⁸⁶ Simpson Branch Record, Film no. 87032, Items 11-12, FHL.

⁸⁷ *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL.

Shortly before they left England, Alexander's wife, Frances, gave birth to a son, George Alexander Sutherland. Although George never embraced the faith, he later established himself as an attorney and politician in the state of Utah, and became the only Utahn to ever be appointed as a Justice of the United States Supreme Court.⁸⁸

The third nineteenth century Buckinghamshire branch was established at Wooburn Green. Although this branch was not officially organized until August 22, 1850,⁸⁹ it had its beginnings in 1849, just like the Edlesborough and Simpson Branches. Unlike those branches, however, this branch was located on the south-western side of Buckinghamshire. It did resemble the Edlesborough Branch in that its ultimate origins lay outside the county, in this case in Berkshire rather than Bedfordshire.

The first converts to move to the Wooburn Green area were Thomas Tanner and his family, who had joined the Church in 1843, in their hometown of Newbury, Berkshire.⁹⁰ Shortly after the Tanner family arrived in Wooburn Green in 1849, Thomas followed the pattern established by many other Mormon converts; he began to share the message of the restored gospel with anyone who would listen. His efforts eventually led to the conversion of the first Wooburn Green natives: William and Susan Beesley and their son Ebenezer, who were all baptized by Tanner in September of 1849.⁹¹ Initially, the Wooburn Green Mormons were attached to the Newbury Branch, but substantial distance led to the establishment of a separate branch.⁹²

⁸⁸ See: historygo.uth.gov/utah_chapters/from_war_to_war/georgesutherland.html, accessed April 23, 2007.

⁸⁹ British Mission, Manuscript History and historical reports, Wooburn Green, London and Reading Conference, Film no. LR 1140/2, Reel 6, Church Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

⁹⁰ Newbury Branch Record, Film no. 87020, Items 17-20, FHL.

⁹¹ Wooburn Branch Record, Film no. 87039, Item 10, FHL.

⁹² Wooburn Branch Record, Film no. 87039, Item 10, FHL.

By 1850, membership of the Church in Wooburn Green had risen to thirty.⁹³ Many came into the Church through the efforts of American missionaries, but Tanner was responsible for ten conversions – thus following the model already seen at Edlesborough and Simpson.⁹⁴ Although Tanner had more experience in the Gospel, William Beesley was appointed as the first president of the Wooburn Branch.⁹⁵ This further illustrates the point that the involvement of recent converts was not only the pattern, but one of the keys to the growth of the Church in Buckinghamshire.

Even though the Mormons at Wooburn Green experienced serious opposition, similar to those at Simpson, the Wooburn Branch was able to meet in public. Although a meetinghouse was not reported in the 1851 Census of Religious Worship,⁹⁶ a local trade directory of 1853 indicated that among the other Churches in Wooburn Green, the Mormons also had a place of worship.⁹⁷ It was identified as a “Mormon Chapel.”⁹⁸ However, historical evidence indicates there was no dedicated Church building in Wooburn Green, and the trade directories do not include a location of the building. However, the name of Henry Hancock, the second branch president of the Wooburn Branch, does appear in the Wooburn Green Census Records for the years 1851 and 1861.⁹⁹

⁹³ British Mission historical reports, Wooburn Green, London and Reading Conference, Church Archives.

⁹⁴ See Newbury Branch Record, Film no. 87020, Items 17-20, and Wooburn Branch Record, Film no. 87039, Item 10, FHL.

⁹⁵ British Mission historical reports, Wooburn Green, London and Reading Conference, Church Archives.

⁹⁶ See Edward Legg, ed., *Buckingham Returns of the Census of Religious Worship 1851*, (Aylesbury, England: Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1991).

⁹⁷ *Mussen and Craven's Commercial Directory of the County of Buckinghamshire*, (Nottingham, England: Stevenson and Company, 1853), 90. Information obtained from Mr. Lawrence Linehan of Wooburn Green.

⁹⁸ *Mussen and Craven's Commercial Directory*, 99.

⁹⁹ Wooburn Green, Buckinghamshire County, England, 1851 British census, record H.O. 1071719; Wooburn Green, Buckinghamshire County, England, 1861 British census, record R.G. 9/857.

By carefully calculating the route taken by the census taker and using known landmarks that existed then and still exist today (for example, “The Red Lion Inn” Public House pictured below)¹⁰⁰ it was possible to establish the residence occupied by Henry Hancock and his family during that time period. This information became increasingly interesting because the 1861 census records that a “Minister of the Latter-day Saints” named George Alfred Wiscombe was also residing with the Hancock family. This led to the notion that an official minister of the Church residing in the home might indicate the home may have been used for Church meetings, and may have even been the “Mormon Chapel” reported in the local trade directories of 1853.

This was confirmed when an entry in Henry Hancock’s eldest daughter Sarah’s life history was discovered which states “Church leaders in Wooburn held meetings in the Hancock home.”¹⁰¹ Fortunately, this home is still extant today and is included in the local Historical Site index as “No. 36” on “The Green” in Wooburn¹⁰² verifying that it did in fact exist at the time a “Mormon Chapel” was listed in *Mussen and*

¹⁰⁰ The building which was crucial to establishing the site of Calico Square and the building the census taker went into after leaving Calico Square was the ‘Anchor’ public house rather than the Red Lion. The ‘Anchor’ is now a private dwelling called ‘the Anchor House’. The Red Lion was also useful in establishing the position of the ‘Anchor’ public house because it is still externally labelled such. I am indebted to Mr. Lawrence Linehan for making the painstaking efforts to calculate this using the 1861 census returns and period maps of Wooburn Green.

¹⁰¹ Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 696.

¹⁰² The home is referred to as “Clematis Cottage,” reference number SU 98 NW, 6/180 in the historical site index. The ‘Department of the Environment List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, Borough of High Wycombe, Bucks’ was published by the Department of the Environment under the terms of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1984 in London. A version of the list, updated in February 1989, is in High Wycombe Reference Library, which I visited on 4 August, 2007. The list shows that the building at 36 on The Green is not a later replacement - it can only be the building where the Reverend Wiscombe was a guest of the Hancocks in 1861. Information obtained from Mr. Lawrence Linehan.

Craven's Commercial Directory noted above. Pictures of the Hancock residence, which doubled as the “Mormon Chapel” (No. 36 on The Green), as well as the “Red Lion Inn,” are displayed below.



Figure 4. Hancock residence, which doubled as the “Mormon Chapel



Figure 5. Red Lion Inn

Life for members of the Church in Wooburn Green was not easy. For a while, at least, they had to contend with aggressive anti-Mormon campaigns. Reverend F. B. Ashley, Vicar of Wooburn, wrote in his *Personal Memoirs*:

The Mormonites were very active long before I came, in the neighbourhood and in the parish, and at that time a priest used to preach on Sundays for three-quarters of an hour at the sign-post between the Vicarage and the Church. I cautioned all I could not to stop or take any notice, but it was a real nuisance when the Holy

Communion was administered, for his voice was strong, and he supposed all had left the Church.... I heard one day that the Independent minister... went up to him; the result was a challenge to a public discussion on Wooburn Green the following Thursday. I was sorry, and called a meeting of teachers and communicants for that evening and put a sketch of the subject before them. Platforms were erected on the Green, four Mormon preachers were brought from London, and my fears were realized. The well-meaning challenger was a novice in the matter; the Mormons had a happy hit in reply to anything he said; he appeared to be beaten, and two houses for Mormon preaching were opened on the Green for week-days as well as Sundays.

My policy had been not to notice the subject, it was so unworthy, but the new revelation took readily; numbers joined, and the crowds that came could not be seated. As general attention had everywhere been drawn to the movement, it would not do to appear blind. The next Sunday morning ... I went to Church not having made my mind what to do, but after the service I gave notice that I would give a lecture on Mormonism in the school-room the following Thursday. It caused great excitement... I sallied out on Thursday evening, and found the road and the room blocked with people. A mill-owner who was amongst them came to me and offered his Sol-room, which was perfectly empty, and would hold a great number standing.... By the time I got to the Sol-room it was... crammed to the door. With difficulty a small table and a cask to put on it got inside. I then mounted, and kept them listening for two hours. The quiet was intense, and I could hear nothing but now and then a gasp of sensation and the scratching of the Mormon reporters' pens.¹⁰³

Reverend Ashley's anti-Mormon lectures were eventually published¹⁰⁴ and multiple editions circulated.¹⁰⁵ His pamphlet, *Mormonism:*

¹⁰³ Francis Busteed Ashley, *Pen and Pencil Sketches - a retrospect of nearly Eighty Years, including about twelve in the artillery and Fifty in the Ministry of the Church of England* by Nemo [i.e. Francis Busteed Ashley], (London: Nisbet, 1889), 158-160. This information was also obtained from Mr. Lawrence Linehan.

¹⁰⁴ Francis Busteed Ashley, *Mormonism: an exposure of the impositions adopted by the sect called "The Latter-day Saints,"* (London: J. Hatchard, 1851).

¹⁰⁵ Ashley, *Pen and Pencil Sketches*, 160.

An exposure of the impositions adopted by the sect called "The Latter-day Saints" sought to clarify and expose his views on the prophet-leader Joseph Smith, the "Golden Plates" from which the "Book of Mormon" was purportedly translated, and other "Mormon Doctrines" and "Mormon Attractions." His arguments corresponded closely with other contemporary anti-Mormon tracts published throughout England but appear to be the only anti-Mormon clerical publications that actually originated from Buckinghamshire during the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁶ He said Joseph Smith was a "false prophet" that "lived a vagrant life with no honest employment," spent his days looking for buried treasure through supernatural means and was adept at deceiving others into believing his pretended revelations.

He recounted accounts of the purported altercations the Mormons had with government officials and citizens in the states of Missouri and Illinois, accusing Joseph Smith and his followers of treason, the attempted murder of the ex-governor of Missouri, and other atrocities. He discredited the Book of Mormon as a piracy of Solomon Spaulding's work *Manuscript Found*, and the existence of the plates from whence it purportedly originated. He also criticized the Mormon belief that God is an anthropomorphic being, because this doctrine contradicts the belief in the Holy Trinity.

However, Reverend Ashley was not alone—other anti-Mormon sentiments were expressed in the *Bucks Free Press*, the local newspaper that circulated in Wooburn and elsewhere in the county. These reports ranged from accounts of the Mormons in Utah purportedly rising up in treason against the United States government, to public encouragement

¹⁰⁶ See Craig L. Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics: a Critical Analysis of Anti-Mormon Pamphleteering in Great Britain, 1837-1860*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2002), 221-234. The author of this article checked each reference on the list provided by Mr. Foster against *Crockford's Clerical Directory*, vols. 5-6, Reel 3, World Microfilms Publications Ltd.

of immorality, to commentary on the pitiable condition of “innocent and deceived” emigrants who were leaving England for Utah.¹⁰⁷

Despite the opposition, the members in Wooburn Green appeared to be content with their new-found religion and lifestyle. In contrast to the somewhat depressed journal entries of Elder Job Smith in the Simpson area, a letter written by Elder Samuel Stephen Jones in 1872 reported that “We have a very fair, lively branch at Woburn, Bucks.... The saints are rather more numerous [than in other areas]... and evince a good lively spirit.”¹⁰⁸ Another missionary, Elder James Payne, wrote that in 1876 he was “laboring with great joy in the London Conference... On this tour I first visited Wooburn Green; held meeting and rebaptized 4 persons.”¹⁰⁹ These letters are surprisingly positive, especially as elsewhere in England the fortunes of the Church appear to have been in decline by the 1870s. This was probably due to the effects of religious persecution associated with anti-campaigns, alleged problems in Utah, and perhaps most of all, to general apathy and lack of religious fervor in England.¹¹⁰

It is possible that relatively favorable conditions at Wooburn Green may have reduced incentives to emigrate, although other factors, to be discussed later, were also at work. Of the thirty original members, only thirteen (43 percent) can be identified as having emigrated.¹¹¹ Included among those who did not emigrate were William Beesley, the

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, “Mormonism” and “The Crisis of Mormonism,” *Bucks Free Press*, June 5, 1857 and “More News about the Mormons,” *Bucks Free Press*, May 21, 1858. These newspaper articles were also provided by Mr. Lawrence Linehan.

¹⁰⁸ “Correspondence,” *Millennial Star*, September 17, 1872, 603.

¹⁰⁹ “Home Correspondence,” *Millennial Star*, February 21, 1876, 124.

¹¹⁰ Bruce Van Orden, “The Decline in Convert Baptisms and Member Emigration from the British Mission after 1870,” *BYU Studies* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1987):103-104.

¹¹¹ *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL. See also Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847-1868 Database, accessed online, www.lds.org/Churchhistory/library/pioneercompanysearch/1,15773,3966-1,00.html, April-July, 2007.

first president of the Wooburn Branch, and his wife Susannah.¹¹² However, the second branch president, Henry Hancock,¹¹³ and his wife Esther did emigrate.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, Ebenezer Beesley, son of the first branch president, married Sarah Hancock, daughter of the second branch president. The young couple emigrated in 1859¹¹⁵ and settled in Salt Lake City. Ebenezer had shown great promise as a musician from his early years, and after moving to Utah he continued his musical training. He eventually became a renowned director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.¹¹⁶ In fact, the current edition of the LDS hymnbook attributes the tunes of thirteen hymns to Ebenezer Beesley,¹¹⁷ including Hymn no. 76, which is sung to a tune Beesley named “Wooburn Green.”¹¹⁸

On March 7, 1852, the final nineteenth century Buckinghamshire branch of record was organized at Aylesbury. Like other Buckinghamshire branches, this congregation was located near the boundary of another county; Aylesbury is close to the ‘tongue’ of Hertfordshire, which comes within a few miles of the town. Like Simpson, membership of the Aylesbury Branch did not result from a migration of recently baptized members, but rather from the efforts of missionaries sent to the area. One of these missionaries, Elder Job Smith, then

¹¹² “William Sheppard Beesley and Susannah Edwards Beesley Family Group Record,” ancestral file numbers 1H79-D3 and 1H79-F8, accessed online, www.familysearch.org, April 17, 2007. Not only do their names not appear on the *Mormon Immigration Index* or the *Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database*, their family group record indicates they both died in England.

¹¹³ British Mission historical reports, Wooburn Green, London and Reading Conference, Church Archives.

¹¹⁴ “Household of Henry and Esther Hancock,” 1880 *United State Census Record*, Liberty, Bear Lake, Idaho, Film No. 1254173, 98D, accessed online, familysearch.org, July 25, 2007.

¹¹⁵ “Ebenezer and Sarah Hancock Beesley,” *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL.

¹¹⁶ Jensen, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:739.

¹¹⁷ *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 387.

¹¹⁸ *Hymns*, 404.

president of the Bedfordshire Conference, wrote of the significant challenges they faced. His entry of March 5, 1852 reads:

Went to Buckingham to visit Elder E.W. Tullidge, one of the traveling elders sent from our conference at Bedford to raise up a branch of the Church. Found him at the house of a deist. I soon learned that he had forsaken his mission and Mormonism; and that he was now a disbeliever in all revealed religion. I reasoned with him but soon found that it was altogether in vain. He expressed disbelief in the Prophet Joseph Smith, in the present authorities and the whole system and in respect to God, he did not know anything of him, but "if he were consumed in hell by him he would then rise up and damn him." At Brother Underwood's the same evening I excommunicated him from the Church. And this at his own request. Next day proceeded to Aylesbury where Elder [William] S. Cope was laboring. He had labored here eight months and baptized 5 persons. A very dull prospect presented itself, but as a family that were scattered at another place were about to move thither it was concluded to organize a branch which was done the 7th [of] March. I endeavored to get a congregation to preach to, by sending the bellman round town, etc., but could not get anybody to come.¹¹⁹

A month later, Elder Smith recorded:

Visited Brother Cope and in consequence of his ill health released him from this labors in the ministry.... Next day proceeded to Buckingham. Found Brother Underwood discouraged. Counseled him to move to a branch of the Church; he said he would. Next day went to Aylesbury. Found Brother Cope trying to heal up difficulties in that young branch which he had raised. Here we had a meeting and cut off two members at their own request; tried to do the best I could to set matters straight with them but I found that the elements were not there for a good branch of the Church.¹²⁰

The Aylesbury Branch record, which covers the years 1851-1853, only lists the names of three of the first five members baptized by Elder Cope, corroborating Smith's story of excommunication.¹²¹ Providentially, the "family that was scattered at another place" which was

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 147-149.

¹²⁰ Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 156-158.

¹²¹ Aylesbury Branch Record, Film no. 86976, Items 15-16, FHL.

“about to move thither” was the George Smith family.¹²² As noted previously, George joined the Church a decade earlier in Hemel Hempstead and served as the president of that branch. His family had already lived in Great Missenden from 1838–1840 and when he returned there sometime after the organization of the Aylesbury Branch, he brought not only his large family of twelve,¹²³ but also his missionary zeal and considerable Church leadership experience. He had already brought nine people into the Hemel Hempstead and Studham Branches,¹²⁴ and upon arriving in Aylesbury, he brought an additional sixteen people into the Church, including some of his own family. His efforts helped the branch grow from five members to thirty in two years.¹²⁵ As in the other three branches examined above, most of the missionary work and convert baptisms in the Aylesbury Branch resulted from the efforts of the native English member-missionaries.

George Smith’s missionary efforts apparently had a positive effect on the general morale of the members and missionaries, and made an impression on the local community as a whole. On Sunday, December 12, 1852, only seven months after the Smith family relocated to Great Missenden, Elder Job Smith wrote, “Visited Brother George Smith of Great Missenden. Held a meeting and had a good congregation to hear me. Next day visited the saints at Aylesbury.”¹²⁶ On January 16, 1853, Elder Smith noted he had “received letters of success of Elder [Richard] Aldridge in Aylesbury”¹²⁷ who had baptized seven more people, and on March 29, 1853 he wrote: “Preached at Aylesbury. Brother Aldridge is laboring here and in Buckingham. Next day proceeded to Buckingham. Found E.W. Tullidge rebaptized, married and

¹²² See Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 158.

¹²³ “George Smith and Caroline Harrison Family Group Record,” ancestral file numbers 1FRB-1T and 1TRV-PB, *Ancestral File*, version 4.19 (2007), accessed online, www.familysearch.org, April 17, 2007.

¹²⁴ See Hemel Hempstead Branch Record, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10, and the Studham Branch Record Film no. 87035, Items 10-11, FHL.

¹²⁵ Aylesbury Branch Record, Film no. 86976, Items 15-16, FHL.

¹²⁶ Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 179.

¹²⁷ Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 181.

housekeeping, and opening his house for meeting. I was much pleased with this, for although he broke loose before, he is a young man of singular and peculiarly adapted talents.”¹²⁸

Elder Job Smith’s assessment of Elder Tullidge proved to be accurate though perhaps only to a certain degree. E.W. Tullidge eventually emigrated to America,¹²⁹ and after arriving in Utah, he pursued an ambitious career in publishing, both in Utah and on the East Coast. His career had many ups and downs, and sadly, towards the end of his life he became destitute. While still a member of the Church, he continued to publish articles and books hostile towards the Church and its leaders. He was finally excommunicated a second time, again at his own request. Tullidge vacillated between anti-Mormon movements, once more repeating the instability he had shown at Buckingham. Yet Elder Smith was right to say that Tullidge possessed “peculiarly adapted talents,” which would be demonstrated by his biographies of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and perhaps most of all in his *History of Salt Lake City*.¹³⁰

In 1854 George Smith’s family of twelve—who represented 40 percent of the membership of the Aylesbury Branch—emigrated at the request of Church leaders in Utah, and became the only members listed in the Aylesbury Branch record to do so.¹³¹ George and Caroline eventually settled in what they called “Pleasant Valley,” Nevada. A biographical sketch of George reads: “Mr. Smith was one of the first, if not the first white man to settle along the Eastern base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains; and by indomitable will and great energy, has accomplished what very few men could have done. The danger surrounding such an early settlement among the Indians cannot be fully

¹²⁸ Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 185-186.

¹²⁹ Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847-1868 Database, accessed online, www.lds.org/Churchhistory/library/pioneercompanysearch/1,15773,3966-1,00.html, Accessed April-July, 2007.

¹³⁰ Ronald W. Walker, “Edward Tullidge: Historian of the Mormon commonwealth,” *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 55-72.

¹³¹ *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL.

portrayed.”¹³² His diligent efforts as a member-missionary are also reflected in this tribute.

Although official branch records indicate that only the Smith family emigrated, other sources suggest there were at least five other people who joined this small branch and emigrated after 1854. The *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* paid tribute to a woman named Amelia Mary Champneys, born in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. She died in Ogden, Utah in 1893 at the age of 36, and was reported to have been “a faithful Latter-day Saint” her entire life. She emigrated with her husband, Thomas, who was also a member of the Church.¹³³ In addition, Robert Price and his older siblings Samuel and Matilda emigrated in 1855, one year after the Smiths. Robert was baptized at Great Misenden, in 1853, and after emigrating, returned to England to serve as a missionary and upon his return to America was called as the bishop in Paris, Idaho.¹³⁴

IMPACT OF LOCAL CONVERT MISSIONARIES

As can be seen in Table 1 below, Mormon missionary work and convert baptisms in nineteenth century Buckinghamshire followed a relatively consistent pattern. Each branch began when missionaries from America converted a small group of key individuals, who then, almost immediately following their baptisms, began proselytizing their friends and neighbors. The initial efforts of the American missionaries brought a small group into the Church and a branch was formed; this was followed by a larger group of converts resulting from the efforts of the newly baptized member-missionaries.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHURCH MEMBERS

This research not only takes into account those people who joined one of the four Buckinghamshire branches for which records

¹³² Myron Angel, *History of Nevada*, 633.

¹³³ “Died,” *Millennial Star*, July 10, 1893, 460.

¹³⁴ Andrew Jensen, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2:36.

exist, but also those who were born in Buckinghamshire but were members of other branches elsewhere in England.¹³⁵

GENDER AND AGE AT TIME OF BAPTISM.

The tables below show the gender as well as the age of members at the time of their baptism. The total numbers in both charts does not agree because information regarding the age of each new convert was not available.

Branch Name	Converts by American Missionaries	Converts by Native Missionaries	Converts—Missionary not listed	Total Membership
Edlesborough	19	125	19	163
Simpson	10	13	15	38
Wooburn	9	10	11	30
Aylesbury	12	16	7	35
Totals	50	164	52	266

Table 1. Buckinghamshire Convert Baptisms and Associated Missionary Efforts

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	175	47%
Female	194	53%
Total	369	100%

Table 2. Gender of Converts

¹³⁵ Data included in Tables 1-4 was extracted from the following branch records: Aylesbury, Film no. 86976, Items 15-16; Bedford, Film no. 86798; Bromley, Film no. 86989, Items 1-8; Croydon, Film no. 86993, Items 8-14; Deptford, Film no. 86994, Items 7-9; Eaton Bray, Film no. 86996, Item 12; Edlesborough, Film no. 86996, Item 12; Finsbury, Film no. 86998, Items 12-14; Great Staughton, Film no. 87000, Item 15; Haggerstone, Film no. 87001, Items 5-6; Hemel Hempstead, Film no. 87002, Items 8-10; Holloway, Film no. 87003, Items 8-10; Kennington, Film no. 87007, Items 6-8; Kensworth, Film no. 87007, Items 10-12; Lambeth, Film no. 87008, Items 2-8; London, Film no. 87103; Luton, Film no. 87106, Items 17-20; Northampton, Film no. 87023, Items 2-3; Notting Hill, Film no. 87026, Item 6; Poplar, Film no. 87028, Items 1-3; Simpson, Film no. 87032, Items 11-12; Stoke Newington, Film no. 87001, Items 1-4; Studham, Film no. 87035, Items 10-11; Wellingborough, Film no. 87038, Items 5-8; Whetstone, Film no. 87038, Items 24-27; Windsor, Film no. 87038, Items 37-38; Wooburn, Film no. 87039, Item 10; and Woolwich, Film no. 87039, Items 16-18, FHL.

Age	Number	Percent
8-17 yrs. old	44	19%
18-30 yrs. old	93	41%
31+ yrs. old	90	40%
Total	227	100%

Table 3. Age at the Time of Baptism

Table 2 shows the total number of females exceeding the total number of males by 6 percent. Table 3 indicates that over 80 percent of converts for whom this information was available were adults at the time of their baptism.

ECONOMIC CONDITION OF CONVERTS.

Those joining the Church in Buckinghamshire were almost exclusively from the poor or laboring class. Trade Directories provide one possible source of information about those who joined the Church. Yet, a careful analysis of these directories published by different companies from 1847 through 1854 revealed that only 10 of 369 members are listed in any directory.¹³⁶ This is a significant indicator of economic status, in that these directories included only the names of those belonging to the gentry' class - of whom none joined the Church - and of those who had businesses or professions, if only at a relatively humble level. Ten of the Buckinghamshire converts are included in the latter

¹³⁶ See "William Savage, Millwright, Wooburn Green;" in *Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire, 1847*, 51; "James Gough, Butcher, Aylesbury;" in *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Buckinghamshire, 1847*, 1765; "William Read, Butcher, North Crawley," in *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Buckinghamshire, 1847*, 1784; "John Cheshire, Carpenter, Eddlesborough," in *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Buckinghamshire, 1847*, 1787; "Mr. Elizabeth Cheshire, Beer Retailer, Eddlesborough," in *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Buckinghamshire, 1847*, 1787; "James Hall, boot and shoe maker and dealer, Aylesbury" and "Joseph Taylor, boot and shoe maker, town crier, Aylesbury," in *Musson and Craven's Commercial Directory of the County of Buckingham, 1853*, 11; "William Bailey, shoemaker, Aylesbury," in *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Buckinghamshire, 1854*, 72; "William Harrowell, boot and shoe maker, Cheddington," in *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Buckinghamshire, 1854*, 89; and "Henry Box, tailor, Wooburn Green," in *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Buckinghamshire, 1854*, 155.

category; the remaining 359 must have come from the ranks of the laboring classes, whether skilled or unskilled.

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Unknown	75	42%
Labourer	22	12%
Spinster	19	11%
Wife	19	11%
Shoemaker	7	4%
Widow	4	2%
Farmer	3	2%
Artist, Baker, Barman, Basket Maker, Blacksmith, Bookkeeper, Brick Layer, Brick maker, Carpenter, Child, Draper, Driver, Gardener, General Dealer, Green Grocer, Milkman, Millwright, Miner, Minister, Pipe Maker, Plaiter, Shepherd, Watchman	Either 1 or 2 people listed each of these	Remaining 16%, but all of them less than 1% by themselves. These were the “skilled laborers.”
Totals	179	100%

Table 4. Occupations of Buckinghamshire Emigrants¹³⁷

Another source of information regarding the economic condition of these converts is the *Mormon Immigration Index*. Some of the occupations of adult members, taken from that index, are displayed in Table 4, above. The largest single group of adult emigrants (45 percent) did not report an occupation. Of those who did, only 20 percent reported one that would have classified them as a “skilled laborer.”¹³⁸ It is important to consider that this information was only available for those members whose names were recorded in the *Mormon Immigration Index*, which does not contain a complete listing of all those who emigrated. This information is further skewed in that it includes only a partial list of those with sufficient means to emigrate. In other words, those too poor to emigrate are not represented.

As is shown in Table 4 above, of the 369 members on record, evidence could only be found documenting the emigration of 179, or

¹³⁷ See *Mormon Immigration Index*, FHL.

¹³⁸ 4% reported “shoemaker,” together with the 16% skilled group.

49percent. At least one explanation for this was the poor economic condition of the members of the Church in Buckinghamshire. Missionary correspondence suggests this was a major factor in determining emigration rates. On February 4, 1863, Elder Joseph Bull wrote:

In this conference, as well as in many others, the Saints are poor as in regards to the goods of this life... Though surrounded by poverty and hard task-masters, with their attendant train of trying circumstances... many are looking forward with eager anxiety for the emigration season to open, that they may gather to the bosom of the Church. That they may do so, nothing is being left untried on their part which will help them to accomplish this so-much-desired object. Several, who have struggled with poverty for years, will have the privilege of emigrating themselves with their own means, having a rigid economy saved out of their weekly pittances, through years of struggling, sufficient to accomplish the much-desired object.¹³⁹

This excerpt, from a letter written by Elder Bull, highlights several important points: (a) the impoverished condition of many of the Saints, (b) their near-universal desire to emigrate to Utah, and (c) the necessity for Saints to save for their own travel, instead of relying on charitable assistance.

Elder R. F. Neslen explained the difficulty facing the Saints seeking to acquire the resources needed for emigration: "Saturday, March 24, [1871] found me visiting among the saints in Stony Stratford and Deanshanger. In these places I found the saints rejoicing in the work, and hoping fervently that their way of deliverance might be shortly opened. They seemingly have not gotten discouraged concerning gathering yet, although, so far as their own means is concerned, their prospects are not much brighter than they were when I became acquainted with them in 1855."¹⁴⁰ Later that same year, however, Elder George W. Wilkin, also writing from Stony Stratford, noted: "The Saints, as a general thing, are poor to this worlds goods, but the greater portion of them are rich in faith. Quite a number have emigrated since

¹³⁹ "Correspondence," *Millennial Star*, March 14, 1863, 173.

¹⁴⁰ "Correspondence," *Millennial Star*, April 18, 1871, 252.

my arrival, and many more are expected to go this season.”¹⁴¹ Despite their poverty, some gradually acquired sufficient money. On October 29, 1873, more than two years after Elder Wilkin wrote, Elder Robert W. Heyborne reported the following, also from Stony Stratford: “We have been able to emigrate 40 persons from the Conference for Utah. Considering the small number in the conference, and the impoverished condition of most of the saints, I feel highly satisfied.”¹⁴²

He wrote again on April 23, 1874: “Considering the impoverished condition of the many of the saints through their limited wages, they are doing well in saving means for emigration, which will enable them, at no very distant future, to affect their deliverance.”¹⁴³ Table 5 below indicates the percentage of members who emigrated based on all known sources of information.

Branch Name	Date Organized	Total Membership	(#) and % Emigrated
Edlesborough	April 1, 1849	163	(77) 47%
Simpson	April 1, 1849	38	(29) 76%
Wooburn	August 22, 1850	30	(13) 43%
Aylesbury	March 7, 1852	35	(17) 49%
Various others	1842 on	103	(43) 42%
Totals		369	(179) 49%

Table 5. Percentage of Members Who Emigrated from 19th Century Branches

Stories of financial challenge, difficulty, and even tragedy abound in the personal journals and diaries of the saints waiting to emigrate. For example, Charlotte Johnson, widow of the deceased Benjamin Johnson, was left with the responsibility of raising nine children between ages two and sixteen.¹⁴⁴ Before he died, Benjamin gathered his

¹⁴¹ “Correspondence,” *Millennial Star*, August 29, 1871, 555.

¹⁴² “Correspondence,” *Millennial Star*, November 4, 1873, 699.

¹⁴³ “Correspondence,” *Millennial Star*, May 5, 1874, 283.

¹⁴⁴ Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson*, call no. 929.273 J63hw, FHL, 31.

family around him and said to Charlotte: "Mother, when you sell what little property we possess and pay off our debts you will have enough money to take you and the children to Utah. So after I die you take our family and to Utah where you can live with the Saints and enjoy the blessings there."¹⁴⁵ Following her husband's wishes, Charlotte sold their property and sent the necessary money to the British Mission Office, entrusting it to a missionary going to Liverpool and then on to America.

He agreed to open an account in her name with the Emigration Fund. However, when the missionary got to Liverpool, he kept the money for himself and took it to California. After waiting eleven years for the Church to help her recoup the money, and with no other hope of emigrating, Elder Franklin D. Richards, President of the British Mission, finally made arrangements for Charlotte Johnson family to emigrate, which they did in 1868.

Trying as these circumstances must have been, there are also stories of extraordinary generosity. When Sister Ann Austin of Frithsden read in the *Millennial Star* that part of the ship *Minnesota* had been chartered by Mormon emigrants, she decided that this was the vessel that would take her family to America. Unfortunately for the Austins, they did not have enough money. Not long before the *Minnesota* was due to depart Bartel Turner, a neighbor from Ivinghoe, surprised them by offering to lend them enough money to emigrate. At first Brother Austin hesitated to accept this generous offer, but finally became convinced that his family's prayers were being answered in a miraculous way. As a result of Brother Turner's generosity, John and Ann Austin and their ten children sailed from Liverpool, on June 22, 1868.¹⁴⁶

Recent converts were not alone in their struggle to raise sufficient funds to emigrate. Expected to proselyte following the New

¹⁴⁵ Hansen, *William, Benjamin and Joseph Thomas Johnson*, call no. 929.273 J63hw, FHL, 30.

¹⁴⁶ See "John Austin" in Jensen, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4:114.

Testament model, without “purse or scrip,”¹⁴⁷ full-time missionaries were almost completely reliant on charitable offerings for their daily sustenance, as well as sufficient funds for emigration. One historian noted a “systematic fund-raising was undertaken in behalf of elders returning to Zion.... Local converts who spent their full time in the ministry were not always so fortunate... but they were usually able at least to borrow the means to emigrate.”¹⁴⁸ This appears to be the case with the missionaries that served in Buckinghamshire. Elder Job Smith wrote about his fund-raising efforts for returning American missionary, John Spiers: “Having walked thither the two previous days.... In all of these places I asked the Saints to raise funds to assist Elder Spiers to emigrate, as he was liberated to return to the valley.... I therefore labored faithfully to render him assistance. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday visited the branches of Luton, Hensworth, and Eaton Bray, holding meetings and raising funds for Br. Spiers.”¹⁴⁹

The collection began on October 24, 1851 and by January 10, 1852, Elder Spiers had emigrated. However, when Elder Thomas Squires, a local convert who served as a full-time missionary for “many years” expressed a desire to emigrate, he apparently experienced a longer wait, although means for his emigration were eventually provided. His life sketch records the following: “Finally the authorities of the Church... gave him the privilege of emigrating to Zion. The conference over which he presided furnished the means to defray the expenses of the journey.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Richard L. Jensen, “Without Purse or Scrip?: financing Latter-day Saint missionary work in Europe in the nineteenth century,” *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985):3-4.

¹⁴⁸ Jensen, “Without Purse or Scrip?,” 4-5.

¹⁴⁹ Smith, *Diary and Autobiography*, Special Collections, BYU, 137-138.

¹⁵⁰ Squires, Notes of interest to the descendents of Thomas Squires, 139.

Location	Total Population	Total Members	Percent
Addington	71	1	1.4%
Aylesbury	6043	11	0.2%
Buckingham	3390	7	0.2%
Buckland	661	3	0.5%
Cheddington	639	3	0.5%
Cuddington	623	1	0.2%
Denham	1062	2	0.2%
Dorney	355	11	3.1%
Claydon(s)	1395	2	0.1%
Edlesborough	1558	14	0.9%
Eton	3796	9	0.2%
Fawley	254	1	0.4%
Fenny Stratford	860	1	0.1%
Frithsden	269	1	0.4%
Great Brickhill	729	1	0.1%
Great Horwood	834	2	0.2%
Great Missenden	2096	18	0.9%
High Wycombe	7178	2	less than 0.1%
Ivinghoe	1894	9	0.5%
Marsh Gibbon	944	1	0.1%
Marsworth	463	1	0.2%
Milton Keynes	317	1	0.3%
Monks Risborough	1064	1	less than 0.1%
Mursley	553	2	0.4%
Newport Pagnell	3651	3	less than 0.1%
North Crawley	914	5	0.5%
Northall	496	4	0.8%
Olney	2331	13	0.6%
Padbury	660	2	0.3%
Pitstone	427	1	0.2%
Princes Risboro	2318	2	less than 0.1%
Sherington	384	13	3.4%
Simpson	540	7	1.3%
Slapton	317	2	0.6%
Stewkley	1432	7	0.4%
Stony Stratford	1757	4	0.2%
Turville	436	2	0.5%
Walton	95	3	3.2%
Weedon	793	1	0.1%
Wing	1376	2	0.1%
Winslow	1805	3	0.2%
Wolverton	2070	8	0.4%
Wooburn	2025	20	1.0%
Total	60875	207	0.3%

Table 6. Percentage of the Total Population who were Members of the Church

MEMBER PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

Table 6 above shows what percentage of the total population of villages and towns were members of the Church, according to the 1851 British Census returns¹⁵¹ and branch records previously cited.¹⁵²

It is important to note, with regards to the table below, that (a) not all towns and villages are represented because many did not have any Church members who either lived or were born there, (b) there were many members of the Church for whom information as to place of birth or residence is not recorded, (c) many members of the Church, particularly in the Edlesborough Branch, cite a town or village outside Buckinghamshire as their place of birth, and (d) membership records are inconsistent in that some include place of birth, others place of residence, and some neither. Of the 369 recorded members of the Church with ties to Buckinghamshire, 207 of them fell into one of the following categories: (a) documented residents of Buckinghamshire who attended a Buckinghamshire branch; (b) attendees of a branch located in Buckinghamshire who were not residents or natives of Buckinghamshire, or (c) attendees of branches outside of Buckinghamshire but natives or residents of the county.

The village with the highest percentage of members of the Church per capita was Sherington (3.4 percent) where the Church in Buckinghamshire had its beginnings. Walton was a close second, where 3.2 percent of the total population joined the Church. Interestingly, Sherington and Walton are in close proximity to each other, and these members would have been part of the Simpson Branch, which also had the highest emigration rate (76 per cent). Dorney, on the other hand, which is in the southern extreme of Buckinghamshire, had 3.1 percent of its total population on the records of the Church. However, these members did not attend a Buckinghamshire branch, but rather, attended the Windsor Branch in Berkshire, which was closer. The only

¹⁵¹ 1851 British Census returns for each town or village in Buckinghamshire acquired online, www.familyhistoryonline.net/database/BucksFHS1851.shtml on July 5, 2007.

¹⁵² See note 127.

other towns with more than one percent Church members were Addington and Simpson, whose members would have also attended the Simpson Branch, and Wooburn Green, whose members constituted the Wooburn Branch. All other towns had less than one percent of their total population recorded as members of the Church in 1851, which was the only census year that coincides with all extant Church records.

These data seem to indicate that Jeremiah's words might be applied to LDS missionary work, convert baptisms and emigration from this county throughout the nineteenth century: "I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (Jeremiah3:14).